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ABSTRACT

Literature has perpetuated through the centuries the cultural and traditional roles and stereotypes of woman, particularly the Hispanic woman. Two main categories or images of woman, with variations and generalizations, have been: (1) the "good woman", symbolized by a woman who can think or do no evil, is pure, understanding, kind, weak, passive, needs to be protected, but yet has an inner strength and a capacity for enduring and suffering; and (2) the "bad woman", symbolized by one who is a temptress and seductress, representing evil through love and the perversion and excess of its passions. The "bad woman" is morally judged and condemned by all and must suffer a severe punishment for her evil actions, usually death by murder or suicide. A third gray-area category is one which blends these two principal images; yet, one image consistently dominates the other. These principal images of woman have persisted in Spanish, Spanish American, and Anglo American literature from their respective beginnings to contemporary examples. These categories are examined in various selections and passages of several Chicano works. Among these are Roland Hinojosa's "Estampas del valle y otras obras"; Jorge Isaacs' "Maria"; Jose Montoya's "La jefita"; Estela Portillo's "The Swallows"; and Rodolfo Anaya's "Bless Me, Ultima." (NQ)

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THE CHICANA IMAGE

The cultural and traditional roles and stereotypes of woman and the Hispanic woman in particular as depicted in literatures have been perpetuated through the centuries by authors reflecting their societies' majority views - male and female alike. There are two main categories or images of woman with variations and generalizations of these two. First, there is the "good woman", symbolized by the Virgin Mary, who can think no evil, do no evil, is pure, understanding, kind, weak, passive, needs to be protected but yet has an inner strength which God granted her, a capacity for enduring and suffering, an inner strength which she passes on to her children, the procreation of which is her task in this world, or ought to be, along with that of making her man happy and satisfied with a minimum of nagging and complaints. In toto, she is frequently an absurd idealization that neither can be achieved nor sustained by a human being. Second, there is the "bad woman", symbolized by Eve, who is a temptress and seductress, representing evil through love and the perversion and excesses of its passions. It was Eve who caused the downfall of man and mankind and the "bad woman" will do the same because her sole purpose is to entrap, confuse, manipulate and weaken man by means of all her magical and mysterious powers. She is the one against whom man and mankind have been warned through literary history. Her treachery and alliance with the Devil and his cohorts make of her

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0002

the dreaded tool for the future downfall of individual men in all societies. She is morally judged and condemned by all and must suffer a severe punishment for her evil actions, usually death by murder or suicide.

A third gray-area category blending these two principal images occurs when they overlap and are synthesized into a duality presented in varying degrees of realism in individual female characters, although one image consistently dominates the other. The emphasis in most literature is on some evil or bad action of the woman - be it a spiritual black thought or a blatant example of malice toward another. In other words, all women who use evil in any form or who do anything contrary to the accepted customs and morés of their society are punished. If they are not absolutely pure, good women - faithful wives and good mothers - or they are not Virgin Marys, they pay for it - sometimes in a way as severe as the totally "bad woman" stereotype must.

These two principal concepts of woman have persisted in Spanish and Spanish American literature, as well as in Anglo-American literature from their respective beginnings to contemporary examples. In an examination of Chicano literature, a direct product of these, we note that these categories do continue to persist in varying degrees as will be seen from selections and passages of various Chicano works. But, there are two new elements of presentation in two works which make the portrayal of woman in Chicano literature unique and distinct from the traditional symbolistic and stereotypic influences of its parent literatures. First, woman is accepted as a human being, but even more importantly, she is neither morally judged nor condemned for

what would traditionally be termed "bad" thoughts or actions - this distinctive treatment occurs in Rolando Hinojosa's work, Estampas del valle y otras obras, and to some extent, in Estela Portillo's play, "The Swallows". Second, Chicano publishing houses not only encourage women to write by soliciting works expressing their views and perspectives of life, but also publish their finished products -- which gives to the development of Chicano literature a breadth and strength which can only serve as an advantage to its growing importance.

The Virgin Mary image is exemplified in Spanish American literature in the 19th-century romantic novel by Jorge Isaacs, María. In the title and in the characteristics of the heroine herself, we perceive the obvious cultural and historical reference and immediately think of variations of this name in other literary works and female images. María herself is a virgin, a pure, young, typical romantic heroine who is weak, suffering, passive in her role in life and totally incapable of an evil thought or act. All she wants is to do good, help others, and love and serve her man in marriage. Her perfection and purity are symbolized by the paled whiteness of her skin and her thoughts. She is the totally "good woman" just as is Tía María from La gaviota, a 19th-century Spanish novel by Fernán Caballero. Tía María is the motherly type to all. Throughout the novel she persists in her total goodness and kindness to others and in her understanding of all, with never a flaw in her perfection. In many Chicano works, we see this same image presented primarily in Mothers and wives who are portrayed with great respect, admiration and love, yet, they still are most often idealized in an exagerrated and unrealis

tic manner. They are shown as hardworking, suffering, tired, enduring all hardships and making all sacrifices for their families with little complaining. The Chicano wife and mother is presented in this traditional and idealized style in the poem "La jefita" by José Montoya.

La jefita

When I remember the campos
Y las noches and the sounds
Of those nights en carpas o
Vagones I remember my jefita's
Palote
Clik-clok; clik-clak-clok
Y su tocesita.

(I swear, she never slept!)

Reluctant awakenings a la media
Noche y la luz prendida.

PRRRRRRINNNNGGGGGG!

A noisy chorro missing the
Basín.

¿Qué horas son, 'ama?
Es tarde me hijito. Cover up
Your little brothers.
Y yo con pena but too sleepy,

Go to bed little mother!

A maternal reply mingled with
The hissing of the hot planchas
Y los frijoles de la hoya
Boiling musically dando segunda
A los ruidos nocturnos and
The snores of the old man

Lulling sounds y los perros

Ladrando -- then the familiar
Hallucinations just before sleep.

And my jefita was no more.

But by then it was time to get Up!

My old man had a chiflidito
That irritated the world to
Wakefulness.

Wheeeeeeet! Wheeeeeeet!

¡Arriba, cabrones chavalos,
Huevones!

Y todavía la pinche
Noche oscura

Y la jefita slapping tortillas.

¡Prieta! Help with the lonches!
¡Caliéntale agua a tu 'apa!

(¡Me la rayo ese! My jefita never
slept!)

Y en el fil, pulling her cien
Libras de algoda se sonreía
Mi jefe y decía,

That woman--she only complains
in her sleep.[1]

La jefita, like most mothers and wives in prose fiction, is not a multi-dimensional human character - she is a stereotype. She is a

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very good woman and we see through her that the stereotype perpetuation continues, partially due to the Hispanic cultural and societal influence and tradition in Chicano life.

Bad women or Eves are often depicted as prostitutes, mistresses, adulterous wives, or women who manipulate everyone to obtain their own selfish desires. Many of these bad women consort with evil spirits or conjure up magical curses to hinder their rivals and more often than not, they are portrayed as presenting a false and deceptive image of goodness to the public. They appear to be everything that a "good" woman should be by traditional standards while in reality being "bad" women. In Spanish literature the classic stereotype of the truly despicable winch is Celestina in the work of the same name, a late 15th-century novelized drama by Fernando de Rojas. She is a former prostitute and conwoman turned go-between in love affairs. Because of her evil, cunning, and deceit she precipitates the deaths of the hero and the heroine, the latter committing suicide, her punishment for having been involved in a socially unacceptable love tryst. Celestina is punished for her evilness, being murdered by her comrades in crime. In Chicano literature, particularly due to contemporary philosophies among Chicanos who are more openly accepting woman's liberation or freedom from rigid images in literature and other art forms, there are few fully-developed examples of a stereotypically "bad woman" like Celestina. There are, however, women who consort with the Devil through black magic and witchcraft, such as the three daughters of Tenorio in the novel Bless Me, Ultima by Rodolfo Anaya. Ultima, the "good" curandera, speaks of them to Antonio

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the protagonist.

> 'They are women who are too ugly to make men happy,' she answered, 'and so they spend their time reading in the Black Book and practicing their evil deeds on poor, unsuspecting people. Instead of working, they spend their nights holding their black masses and dancing for the devil in the darkness of the river. But they are amateurs, Antonio.' Ultima shook her head slowly, 'they have no power like the power of a good curandera. In a few days they will be wishing they had never sold their souls to the devil--'[2]

Shortly after Ultima exorcises the evil curses put upon Antonio's uncle by the Tenorio sisters, they become mysteriously and suddenly ill, two of them dying. It is their deaths which are their traditional punishment for being evil.

The bad woman who appears to be good but in reality has elements of a black spirit of does something totally unacceptable to society's ideas of what a woman should be and do, is exemplified in Spanish literature in the 19th-century novel by Pérez Galdós, Doña Perfecta. In Chicano literature her stereotyped image appears in two characters: Doña Marina, a cold, obsessed woman from the short story by Octavio Romano-V entitled "A Rosary for Doña Marina"[3], and Doña Josefa, a pious, charitable symbol of total benevolence and the paragon of virtue in the play "The Swallows" by Estela Portillo. Doña Perfecta was exactly the opposite of her name and of her public and private image. Her appearance deceived her true character - that of a cold, dominating, manipulative woman who caused the murder of her daughter's suitor which in turn drove her daughter insane. Doña Marina, like Doña Perfecta, drives away from her those who could have loved her and did. Because of her cold personality, she was deserted by her husband when still only a newlywed and that rejection by man corrupted her

thoughts turning them to evil. Her niece Lina and her second cousin Pedro lived with her for some time in what seemed to be peaceful harmony. A surrogate Mother, she was restrictive to Lina, but Lina never rebelled, true to the image of a good daughter - totally innocent of the ways of men and the world. But, Doña Marina becomes obsessed with the idea that Lina is carrying on a torrid love affair with a young boy who had carried her books home for her - once. Her imaginings of evil and illicit love between Lina and the boy drive her to believing that Lina has become pregnant, simply because she is ill in the morning for several days in a row. She forces Lina to go to an abortion clinic across the border, without telling her what kind of place it is. When her cousin Pedro wraps a small present to take to Lina in the clinic, Doña Marina begins to suspect that he is the father of the non-existent child. In a frenzied fit, she takes an axe and chops up the bed in Pedro's room where she believes the incestuous relationship to have occurred. Her twisted thoughts about innocence, love, and virtue have turned her away from those who loved her and in turn driven them from her. Pedro leaves home never to return and Lina runs away from the clinic when she discovers what is going on. Doña Marina says a rosary for them in their debauchery when in reality, she is the one who needs the rosary said for her.

Doña Josefa in "The Swallows", like Doña Marina and Doña Perfecta, appears to be the epitome of feminine virtue. She is a single woman who earns her living making the most delicate of laces, helps the poor whenever needed, is essential to all church activities, and is considered to be the kindest and most wonderful woman in the barrio.

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She takes into her own home a poor, innocent young girl, Alysea, after having rescued the latter from a man who was trying to force her to return to a brothel to where she had been tricked to going. When Doña Josefa's ward David has his tongue cut out by some mysterious intruder, we have the first concrete suspicion that something is very wrong in the household. It is her uncle Tomás, a drunkard and a thief, who confronts her with the possibility of being exposed for what he believes her to be - a bad, evil woman. Alysea has just left the room with her fiancé when Tomás begins to speak to Josefa:

T: (shyly) I guess she feels bad about David ... what happened last night....
J: What?
T: I heard the talk in the barrio ... someone broke into the house... that is ... that is what you claim.
J: What do you mean?
T: You didn't tell me earlier....
J: Tell you? Why should I tell you anything.
T: The blood in the pail ... you didn't tell me anything about that either...
J: So?
T: Well ... I remember ... all those times ... you save the poor; innocent, helpless ones ... you never say anything ... it's always the barrio who puts the story together ... you are clever ....
J: Don't be ridiculous....
T: Yes ... people have no idea how clever you really are ... la doña Perfecta! You saved Alysea from the evil man ... you saved David from a drunken father, the barrio tells the story of an angel ... but it's funny ... somehow ... they never remember to tell that you crippled one man and the other died on the road where you left him....
J: You are pitiful ... like those two men ... destructive and pitiful....
T: Perhaps you'll get your hands on me too.
J: Hadn't you better see about that horse?
T: Now the town is busy making you out a heroine ... an intruder? That's hard to believe ... the girl looked too guilty a while ago ... (he studies Josefa who is straightening up) But you ... it's amazing! ... such grace ... such pious silence ... yes ... you are a dangerous one, alright![4]

When Alysea decides to leave Doña Josefa's home to get married, Josefa's

world begins to disintegrate rapidly. It is in her confession to Father Prado that we learn that she hates men for their crudeness and cruelty and that she cut out David's tongue. But, like both Doña Marina and Doña Perfecta, she feels no sorrow for her actions nor any guilt. Her conversation with the priest takes place the day before the entire barrio is to honor her during the religious festival for the virgins of the parish. Father Prado praises her goodness and tremendous godly faith, calling her "a legend" among the people.[5] Unable to withstand his praise while living with her evil actions, she is forced to confess to the shocked and disbelieving priest that she cut David's tongue for fear that he would reveal to the people that respected and loved her that she was a lesbian. She atones for her evil by committing suicide the next morning dressed in a white lace dress. Like most "bad" women who either consort with the Devil's agents or are socially unacceptable, she is condemned to her punishment, death by suicide. But, although Portillo punishes her in this stereotypically traditional manner, throughout the play the author elicits and maintains an understanding and compassion for Josefa and even for her lesbianism. Doña Josefa knew that neither her culture nor her peers could accept her as she really was, and thus she could not accept or forgive herself. Portillo suggests that it is wrong for women or for anyone to be so rigidly pressured into a stereotyped role,not allowing for variations. That is, she implies that Doña Josefa was not totally bad as her acts condemned her nor was she totally good as her false image portrayed her to be.

The duality of woman is seen in Última, the "good" curandera

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from Bless Me, Ultima by Anaya. She uses her herbs, spells and incantations only for the good of people, yet she is feared and shunned by many of them, even those she helps. And, simply because she is involved in the "black arts", the unknown, she too, like the bad curanderas, like Doña Marina and Doña Josefa, must be punished for her seeming transgressions against what is natural for the role of a woman. On her deathbed, she describes herself as an avenging force which used evil against evil in an attempt to destroy it.

> 'My work was to do good, ... I was to heal the sick and show them the path of goodness. But I was not to interfere with the destiny of any man. Those who wallow in evil and brujería cannot understand this. They create a disharmony that in the end reaches out and destroys life -- With the passing away of Tenorio and myself the meddling will be done with, harmony will be reconstituted. That is good. Bear him no ill will -- I accept my death because I accept to work for life --'[6]

She is good, yet she too must be punished by death in a traditional way.

It is in certain very humorous and human vignettes of Rolando Hinojosa's work, Estampas del valle y otras obras, that we see the new treatment or portrayal of woman. The Chicana woman, being a participant in both Hispanic and Anglo cultures and a product of both, enjoys the advantages and disadvantages of the restrictive traditions of the Hispanic female role as well as the freer more liberated responsibilities thrust upon her by Anglo influences. In Hinojosa's work, there is little if any moral judgment, condemnation, or punishment for the woman who dabbles in superstitions or the black arts or for the prostitute or mistress who has traditionally been the "baddest" of women. In the selection "My Aunt Panchita", we see

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the family's "good" curandera performing her duties as such, but, there is no threat of an untimely death, nor a life-death struggle against evil evident. She is a necessary, accepted, tolerated although sometimes teased member of the family, but she is no Ultima nor a Tenorio sister. Hinojosa vividly pictures her role in the following excerpts:

> 'Where's the patient?' ....
> 'Okay, close the curtains. Everybody out and close the door behind you, I'm gonna begin.'
> Aunt Panchita took out a brownish egg from the grocery bag and made the sign of the cross with it over Rafa Buenrostro's face. Then she made another sign of the cross covering his entire body and began to pray: ...
> . . . . . .
> Aunt Panchita repeated the prayer, the incantation and the offering twice then broke the egg in a green plate which she placed under the bed. Rafa Buenrostro breathed deeply and fell into a sleep that lasted a day and a half.[7]

Like Ultima, she is a very religious woman and only tries to do good and help people, but culturally, her religiousness does not prevent her from using traditional pagan customs or superstitious rituals for dealing with maladies of the body and soul. Unlike Ultima, however, she isn't going to die for involvement with such forces.

It is primarily in Hinojosa's presentations of the prostitute and the mistress that we see a totally unreserved acceptance of such roles with a complete absence of moral condemnation and punishment. This attitude is exemplified first in the following selection, "Fira the Blond".

> Without beating around the bush: Fira the Blond is a whore. She doesn't pretend to be a whore(like maids do) nor does she whore around(like society women); no. Fira's a whore and that's that. There's more. Fira has blue eyes, short hair which she doesn't dye and a figure that would stop the hiccups of don Pedro Zamudio, the parish priest.

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> Fira isn't from around here. ... but, truthfully, she certainly has to be the most beautiful woman of the Valley. ...
>
> Fira is a serious woman who carries her whoredom like school girls carry their books: naturally. After she bathes, she smells of soap and water and when she goes to work, the curls by her temples are still wet.
>
> She works in the tavern owned by Félix Champión, an illegitimate son of my Uncle Andrés. She neither dances nor struts from table to table nor flirts nor carries on. Don Quixote used to say that being a go-between was serious business; that may be, but the occupation of being a whore in a simple tavern of a one horse town is nothing to laugh about either.
>
> The women of Klail know who she is and what she is and that's it. If they gossip, that's their business but the majority don't; the majority don't gossip. Women usually tend to be understanding when they feel like it.
>
> The only bad part of it all is that Fira won't last much longer in Klail: It's too small and, to tell the truth, money's scarce around here.[8]

Women and men can be understanding of other human beings when they want to be and it is this point that Hinojosa subtly stresses. Fira is not punished for being a prostitute, except for having a hard time financially because of the size of the town. He implies that her goodness or badness has nothing at all to do with her profession or some indiscretion she might commit against society - she is just human like anybody else, she hasn't even necessarily strayed from any righteous path - she is just trying to survive in a tough world. Hinojosa obviously respects Fira for her honesty and her naturalness. She doesn't pretend to be a Doña Marina nor a Doña Josefa, unrealistically living a life of lies. This same nonjudgmental portrayal is seen in the character Viola Barragán, a twice-widowed, fairly well-to-do Chicana who has returned to the Valley after traveling the world over. She decides to become the mistress of one Pioquinto Reyes, whom she picks out of a crowd as being a man whom she could like. Hinojosa sums up her relationship with Reyes as his mistress in the following excerpts:

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> ...Death took Pioquinto at the Holiday Inn on Highway 11 in front of what was, in its better days, the edge of the black ghetto.
>
> Pioquinto didn't work in the motel: he was a guest; ... When he heard the trumpet announcing his day of judgment, Pioquinto was mounted atop Viola Barragán, a woman who, some.twenty years back, was the best piece of ass around and who is still giving people something to talk about. Pioquinto kicked the bucket, so to speak, in full swing, taking up the harp like anybody else.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> ....It happened that after the burial when everyone had left, a woman ... went over to the mound of earth where Pioquinto was resting. From her ... purse, she took out a knotted handkerchief that she untied producing a gold ring that was neither wide nor thick. As she buried the ring at the foot of the mound, she soiled her gloves but she didn't seem to mind the mud that had formed there ... There were no prayers nor sobs, but rather a resigned look, with her head held high, clear-eyed and without the slightest trace of emotion on her lips.[9]

Viola appears to be devoid of deep passion for Pioquinto, but her caring and love for him are evident in her gesture. In flashback form, Hinojosa gives further circumstances of Pioquinto's death:

> When Pioquinto gave up the ghost in the Holiday Inn, Viola (whom nothing could frighten anymore) dressed leisurely, left the room and elegantly went to Edgerton where she detached herself from the situation as if nothing had happened. Pioquinto was found by a janitor who notified the manager who etc., etc.,...
>
> . . . . . .
>
> Viola? Doing all right, thank you. Now, at fifty some odd years she still holds up well against time. That bit about the ring, if it need to be mentioned, was a first class gesture, one of generosity worthy of instruction to those of little heart.[10]

Even though Viola flaunts tradition in her relationship with a married man, she is not presented as a "bad" woman. She is not punished as the final lines indicated - she is doing just fine. Hinojosa shows that both Fira and Viola, who would traditionally have been depicted as "bad" women in Hispanic literatures are just plain human.

Thus, we have seen the traditional stereotype of the "good" and the "bad" woman persisting in Chicano works with the idealization

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of the good mother and wife and the moral judgment and punishment of the female evil-doer. But, we have significantly pointed out that in Portillo's work, "The Swallows", compassion and understanding for the protagonist are elicited and in Hinojosa's work Estampas that no moral judgment occurs - he totally rejects the idea of punishing woman for any social or moral indiscretion, thus fully discarding the traditional stereotypes of "good" and "bad" women.

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NOTES

[1]José Montoya, "La jefita," in El Espejo - The Mirror, Selected Chicano Literature, eds. Octavio Romano-V. and Herminio Ríos C. (Berkeley: Quinto Sol Publications, 1972), pp. 232-33.

[2]Rudolfo A. Anaya, Bless Me, Última (Berkeley: Quinto Sol, 1972), pp. 91-92).

[3]Octavio Romano-V., "A Rosary for Doña Marina," in El Espejo, pp. 75-93.

[4]Estela Portillo, "The Swallows," El Espejo, p. 169.

[5]Ibid., p. 185.

[6]Anaya, Última, p. 247.

[7]Rolando R. Hinojosa-S., Estampas del valle y otras obras (Berkeley: Quinto Sol, 1973), p. 80.

[8]Ibid., p. 82.

[9]Ibid., pp. 139-40.

[10]Ibid., p. 141.